

NBC Facing Government Crackdown

By Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson

The National Broadcasting Company is being indicted this week for bugging the room for the Democratic Platform Committee in Chicago. The microphone was hidden under a pillow on a sofa in the Platform Committee room and the NBC producer who allegedly placed it there, Enid Roth, has been selected as the scapegoat.

This action marks the first time in history that the Government has cracked down on the high-handed operations of the networks, which in the past have helped instigate riots, played a part in encouraging trouble during the Little Rock school crisis, and slanted the news brazenly at the Chicago convention.

The latter is under congressional investigation right now by the House Interstate Commerce Committee. Specifically Chairman Harley Staggers (D., W.Va.), has ordered a probe of the network's news coverage in Chicago, as compared with its coverage of the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach.

Preliminary investigation confirms reports that some of the networks deliberately went out to slant the news. House investigators have reported, among other things, that while Vice President Humphrey was delivering his acceptance speech, NBC had six cameras

focused on him, but the director was partial to one particular camera showing an unfavorable pose of the Vice President.

The other cameras showed favorable poses. The producer's partiality for the unfavorable pose became so marked that an NBC assistant director called this to the director's attention. He waved the protest aside.

Evidence Submitted

Sen. Gale McGee (D., Wyo.) has also supplied House investigators with information regarding an incident he witnessed on the Chicago streets. He saw a TV producer lining up several girls before his camera. They were unhurt, unmenaced, unthreatened. However, the minute he gave the cue, they began screaming "Don't hit me! Don't hit me!"

There is also evidence that the networks were sore at Mayor Richard Daley and were determined to put him in the worst possible light. They didn't want to come to Chicago in the first place, since to have remained in Miami Beach would have saved the networks between \$2 million and \$3 million for duplicate electric installations. In addition they harassed the Mayor over the location of mobile units, etc.

The Mayor is not photogenic and the networks went out of their way to make him less so. Unquestionably the Chi-

cago police over-reacted. But the basic fact is that three persons were killed during riots in Miami while the Republican Convention was going on in Miami Beach, none in Chicago. A curfew was imposed in Miami, none in Chicago, and TV film clips were sent all over the Communist and non-Communist world showing the Chicago riots, some of them partially whipped up by TV producers.

Whether Chairman Staggers extends his probe further remains to be seen. If so he would find, as reported in The Washington Post, how the April race riots in Washington actually got started when TV cameras appeared on the scene and young Negroes seized the opportunity to "get on television," or how the riots in Newark, N.J., the year before were especially whipped up by young Negro leaders when TV cameras were present. After 11 p.m. and the last TV news show it was found that violence subsided.

Commission Probe
Meanwhile the National Commission on Violence, under Dr. Milton Eisenhower, has finally been goaded into extending its probe into TV violence. Chief goader was Rep. Hale Boggs, (D-La.), who has demanded that network executives come before the Commission and testify regarding what Boggs calls "brutality for profit."

"The trouble with television," says Boggs, "is first

that directors are entertainment-trained, not information-trained. Second the TV executives are scrambling for ratings because ratings mean profit.

"Every parent in the country has been alarmed and worried over the exploitation of violence on television for profit.

"We cannot tolerate violence in any form, whether it be on the streets or on the TV screen, whether it is because of racial misunderstanding or for network profit."

Significantly, when the NBC Mike was hidden in the Democratic Platform Committee hearing room — over which Rep. Boggs was presiding — NBC eavesdroppers overheard discussion of violence in TV programming.

The communications plank for the Democratic platform was under discussion, and it was proposed that the Democratic Party go on record in support of educational television. However, Humphrey forces wanted a much stronger plank, and after some debate won out.

Thanks to this, the Democratic platform now reads: "We deplore the all-too frequent practice of exploiting violence in television programming and urge the Federal Communications Commission, through the use of its power to revoke and renew broadcast licenses, to end this practice."

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